

Thoughts and Reveries

of an

...American Bluejacket...

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by

*Ernest Vincent Wright, U. S. N.*





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PS 3545  
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FEB -8 1918

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## THE LONESOME BLUEJACKET

Great multitudes who cheer and weep  
And smile thro' tear-dimmed eye,  
Line curb and windows, waving flags,  
To bid the boys good-bye.  
With martial music from the bands,  
The khaki-lads sweep past,  
While parents look, with sinking hearts,  
And sweethearts stand aghast.

Thus goes the Army. Still, howe'er,  
Another force must go.  
Brave fellows too; proud, vigorous, strong.  
Yet they're sent, devoid of show.  
No blaring bands, no waving hands,—  
'Tis lonesome as can be  
At midnight in the Navy Yard  
When the Fleet puts out to sea!

Shore leave is o'er some hours before,  
And all whose homes are near,  
Have taken leave in privacy  
Of those they hold most dear.  
But wait! Do all *have* folks to leave?  
Nay! Many there are like me,  
With no one living now, to care  
When the Fleet puts out to sea.

In spite of guards, police and such,  
Some suffering feminine hearts  
Plunge madly down the gloomy pier  
Just as the vessel starts.  
With anguished gaze they scan the crew,—  
But nay! It is not for me;—  
Since mother died there's no one now  
Cares *when* I go to sea.

Oh, for a fluttering handkerchief!  
Oh, for a heart-felt sigh;  
At the gang-plank! Oh, for a farewell kiss  
When the order comes,—“Stand by!”  
How I crave a pair of clinging arms  
To revive the Soul in me!  
To hold on tight, like they'd forbid  
The Fleet to put to sea!

Oh, well! Maybe when "over there,"  
Where enemy submarines swarm,  
I'll do my part as well as those  
Who have some "folks at home."  
Home? Ah, God! That wondrous place  
Which mother made for me!  
Henceforth 'tis where I hang my hat  
When the Fleet puts out to sea!

The great ships carry ponderous guns  
And thousands of tons of coal,  
But the heaviest thing by far on board  
Is a lonely sailor's Soul!  
And when we're back, the boys will rush  
Into yearning arms they'll see,  
But I'll take a nap; nobody cares  
When I come back from sea!



## A SAILOR'S FRIENDS AT SEA

When the fleet steams out at sunset  
And the sea is red and gold:  
When the dying day brings phantoms  
Of those happier days of old;  
When timid stars are peeping  
Through the haze above the sea—  
Ah! Then departed loved ones  
Come back—to comfort me.

When the true steel grey of twilight  
Spans the horizon's rim  
I see Dad's noble countenance  
And raise my eyes to him.  
The grandeur of the cloud-fields  
Recalls his love for me—  
And I love to feel he's watching  
As I'm way, way out at sea.

And when two tiny starlets  
 Like sleepy babies blink  
 My two wee sisters gaze at me,  
 Their minds too young to think;  
 Yet watching, with their cherub eyes,  
 As the dusk enshrouds the sea,  
 I love to feel their innocence  
 As a guardian over me.  
 But ah! When wondrous splendor  
 Has set the heavens ablaze!  
 When scarlet, purple, green and pink  
 Are pierced by golden rays!  
 Look there! Up high! Way over all!  
 Ah, God! Thou art good to me  
 To thus bring Mother's face—to cheer  
 And guide me—out at sea!  
 Alas! They're but sweet memories now,  
 So I'll sail on each day;  
 Knowing my sunset visitors will  
 For the lonely days repay.  
 And when the fleet half-masts its flags  
 As it's apt to do—for me  
 I'll try to cheer some sailor lad,  
 As I gaze down on the sea

### OLD GLORY'S BRIDE

Old Glory, long the Nation's pride,  
 Supreme throughout the land so wide,  
 Standing for Liberty, Peace and Love,  
 Its record pure as the skies above,  
 Comes, at last, to that stage of life  
 Where he feels the need of a helpful wife  
 To carry, with him, at least a share  
 Of the many burdens he has to bear.  
 So, in looking round, his leading thought  
 Was that the lady surely ought  
 To match his own complexion; so  
 He looked for one who'd cheeks aglow  
 In red and white. Then, to his mind,  
 Came the idea that could he find  
 One blest with eyes like stars, she'd be  
 The essence of propriety.

He found her; for he did not lag,  
And he called his bride "The Service Flag."  
Quoth he, "I'll call the fighters out,  
I'll lead them as they march and shout,  
I'll spur them on thro' battle's heat,  
For I have never known defeat!  
I'll show this fighting, war-mad age  
The finest troops of History's page!"  
"And," quoth his gentle bride, "I'll stay  
Outside their homes by night and day.  
I'll tell the world they've made the start  
And left home with a hero's heart!  
I'll show a star for every man,  
So get me every one you can!  
While you, my brave, go forth to roam  
Your wife's place is, you know, at home."

So let's all hail Old Glory's mate!  
And let no person hesitate  
To give salute when passing by,  
A home from which she's seen to fly.  
For in those homes the hearts are sad,  
Yet swelled with hope that every lad  
May soon return, to see, with pride,  
His star upon Old Glory's bride!



## STRANDS OF BLUE

### 1

Why do we hear, "Help the khaki lads!"  
And "The boys who are over there?"  
Why does the slogan "Trenches first!"  
Ring out at you everywhere?  
Why is it ninety-nine per cent  
Of the knit goods are of brown?  
Is it because brown khaki suits  
Are common sights in town?



## 2

But now and then, God bless her soul,  
 Some noble little heart,  
 Knits strands of blue! So, maybe, then  
 There is *another* part  
 Of the fighting forces of the land!  
 Why, certainly! Hadn't you heard  
 Of the great ships waiting off the coast,—  
 Just waiting for the word?

## 3

'Tis cold in trenches, deep with mud,  
 In a ditch up to your neck;  
 But didn't you know? Oh, dear me! Yes,  
 It's also cold on deck  
 Of a speeding lank torpedo-boat,  
 Racing along its way!  
 And the cold gets at your "innards"  
 If you stand there night and day.

## 4

"Boys in the trenches!" Tell me, please,  
 How they *got* "over there!"  
 They couldn't march; they didn't swim;  
 Well, well, now, I declare!  
 It must have been the Navy lads!  
 Yes! Sure! That's how it came,  
 That half a million khaki lads  
 Got there to play the game!

## 5

The Navy lads! The happy lads,  
 Who sing and scrap and dance!  
 With hats shaped like a blueberry pie  
 And their floppy, flappy pants!  
 Oh! They're *real* boys of sterling build;  
 Who, while the "khakis" sleep,  
 Shiver, while hunting periscopes,—  
 Those terrors of the deep!

## 5

Hurrah! I say, for the Army lads!  
 All honor their suits of brown!  
 Their courage, skill, integrity,  
 Are objects of renown.  
 But *also* "Hurrah!" loud and strong,  
 For the brave bluejackets, too!  
 And "*hats off*" to the little girl  
 With her needles "cast on" with blue!



## AT SEA

Is a sailor lonely at sea? Ah! ask  
 Of many a hundred men  
 Whose folks are dead, whose one-time friends  
 Will not think of them again.  
 When the mail arrives 'tis a joyous hour  
 For all but those, like me,  
 Who have few blood-ties left, to write;—  
 Ah! Then 'tis lonely at sea!

But look! A note from an unknown friend!  
 (Or a post-card which cost a penny)  
 And *your name is called* by the letter-clerk  
 Instead of the gruff "Not any!"  
 How your name gleams out on the envelope  
 As in days that used to be  
 When all the departed loved ones wrote—  
 Before it was lonely at sea!

A chance may come when maybe I  
 Some valorous act may do  
 Receiving, perhaps, an honor badge  
 'Midst the plaudits of the crew.  
 Yet, where's the joy? No praise from "Dad."  
 No mother's smile for me—  
 Only a headline, perhaps, in print—  
 And it's lonelier still—at sea!

Some day the ship will start for "home,"  
How that word makes you start  
When months and years its sound has not  
Been known inside your heart!  
Of course our home's aboard the ship.  
Canst call it "home"? Ah, me!  
'Tis slander, almost, on the word—  
My! It's lonely at sea!"

### THE POWER OF A SMILE

When your lonely and downhearted  
With your folks all dead and gone,  
And question whether living's worth the while;  
When the world seems cold and boundless  
Though it's filled with others' joys,  
How you crave the warming sunshine of a  
smile!

After years of heartsick longing  
For the friendly welcome hand,  
The warmth of which upon your own remains.  
If you meet it unexpectedly  
How vain to even try  
To analyze the Power it contains!

How this hand and smile do reach  
The deep spots of your heart,  
Where cold and chill and hopelessness have  
dwelt!

What true, wholehearted beams of light  
Shine from a true friend's face,  
When trying to make a welcome really felt!

Then, see! The world seems brightening!  
Like darkness before dawn,  
The clouds of loneliness are fading fast;  
The world seems almost rosy!  
For smiles straight from a heart  
Can melt the wildest, coldest wintry blast.

All the public orators  
Who ever stirred the world,  
Or poets with their sonnets that beguile,  
Cannot in all their glory  
Even *partially* exert  
A fraction of the power of a smile.

True welcome is a simple thing;—  
A smile of beaming warmth,  
A twinkling of the eyes, and that is all;  
But with it comes that wondrous thing,  
That magic clasp of hand,  
Before which icy loneliness must fall.

And so you'll find where'er you go,  
No matter who you meet,  
The welcome there will never be worth while,  
Without that curious "something."—  
That heaven-sent mystery  
Which puts such mighty power in a smile!

### FOR BRAVERY?

My little boy has died. The fight  
Was over in an hour;  
The great ships circled, raced and belched  
Their holocausts of power.  
Whilst admiral and captain ruled  
He waved flags at their side,  
Just as he used to at my knee;—  
But now "little boy" has died!

My "little" boy? Yes! Such he was!  
Though he was twenty-three,  
I saw him only as a babe,  
Just "little boy" to me!  
And when his puppet soldiers fell,  
He'd stop if he saw I "cried."  
But, oh! These great ships didn't stop;—  
And—my little boy has died!

Ah! What could he do? Why was he there?  
With his little flags to wave?  
He used to play with wee flags once,  
And march round, big and brave,  
While I—I watched and guided him  
‘Till he slumbered at my side,  
I must have slumbered too; for now,  
My little boy has died.

My little boy with his waving flags  
Has wandered from my knee.  
His little flags were found with him,  
As he floated on the sea.  
They’re having a medal made for me,  
Inscribed upon one side  
“For bravery!” Nay! Put there, instead,  
“My little boy has died.”

## ODE TO MY SWEATER

### 1

Cling round my form, oh, vest of wool;  
You, who have come to me  
From some unknown but generous friend  
As I’m ready for the sea.  
Who sent you here? What? Speak up, loud!  
Where are the nimble hands  
That made you, you warm-hearted thing,  
From simple woolen strands?

### 2

Was it in school at recess time  
She passed all games aside,  
To “cast on eighty-four,” to start  
You, object of her pride?  
Or was it at some college dance  
She wove your walls of grey?  
Or was she on a bed of pain?  
Oh, say not so, I pray!

Were you made by a glowing hearth  
 With lights down, soft and low?  
 And did she sing, and gently rock  
 A cradle with her toe?  
 Or were you born in a trolley car  
 With its clang and bang and lurch?  
 Or (whisper softly in my ear),  
 Sh-h! Were you made *in church*?

Don't tell me she was old and poor  
 And great privations stood  
 To save the money for the yarn  
 To make you thick and good!  
 Whatever the story of your birth  
 Please, *please* don't be so mean,  
 Even if true, to say that you  
 Were *made on a machine!*

May every blessing, every joy,  
 And every happiness be  
 The just reward of her, who sent  
 You here, old chap, to me.  
 And when your loving, clinging strands  
 Around my form are curled,  
 They'll prove American women are  
 The finest in the world!

### HANGING THE FLAG

Should the star-field hang to right or left?  
 Is asked by those of reason bereft.  
 You'll find Old Glory, no matter how tied,  
 Is *never* "back-to"; *has no* "wrong side!"  
 Its stars, in battle, shone just as bright,  
 Whether flown to left or waved to right.  
 Whichever side's exposed to view  
 Its message of "Liberty" gleams at you!  
*Forget* how the Star-Spangled Banner is  
 hung!

Put your energies into *getting it sung!*  
 Take out your flag from box or shelf  
 (Or *buy* one today, if you've none, yourself);  
 Hang it left or right, on pole or screen,  
 But GET IT UP SOMEHOW, where it can be seen!

## THE MASTERPIECE

The Angels of Heaven, so they say  
Congregated one glorious day  
On a vast expanse of snowy clouds.  
They came in groups, they came in crowds;  
For a contest, open to all, was on  
To see who best could improve upon  
The wonderful, exquisite things  
That throng the glorious Realms of Wings.  
One angel, noble and grand to see  
Displayed a beautiful flowering tree;  
Another a statue of fairy grace,—  
Wondrous of form, grand of face.  
Others exhibited works of art,  
And lots of them chose the human heart  
As being more beautiful, as itself,  
Than anything known by man or elf.  
As the contest waged the multitudes  
Flocked to display their wondrous goods  
With "Oh's" and "Ah's" from far and wide.  
Till look! Came an angel from one side,  
Hiding beneath her folded wing,  
Everyone felt, some exquisite thing.  
And the multitudes around her whirled  
As she delicately her wing unfurled.  
What was it? Radiance most serene,  
Or Art such angels ne'er had seen?  
Or was it a burst of music grand?  
Or a blossom supreme, made by her hand?  
And why was that mighty concourse stilled  
With admiration; and rapture filled,  
As the Angel, known as Goodness, stood  
In the midst of that eager multitude?  
A Soul emerged from beneath her wing.  
It stood there in that mighty ring,  
A girlish figure in purest white  
Surrounded by a wondrous light  
Of Loyalty, Charity, Truth and Strength  
Of character, Love, until, at length  
The ring closed in with a joyous whirl,—  
And named the prize—"the American Girl!"

## THE NAVY'S CHRISTMAS TREE

### 1

It quietly came aboard, unseen,  
This wonderful, beautiful thing,  
And lay in hiding throughout the day  
Huddled in some dark passageway,  
With its carols all ready to sing.  
Through the terrible Dreadnaught, solely built  
To belch forth fire and death,  
The crew were lying in groups about,  
Their minds on Christmas at home, no doubt,  
With, perchance, a catch of the breath.

'Twas all so cruel, cold and hard,  
The sea so bare, so vast,  
It could not be that Christmas-tide  
Could find them on that waste so wide.  
And they fell asleep,—at last.  
But oh! Behold! When they awoke  
There, in their wondering gaze  
It stood; a beautiful thing of love,  
Bringing its message of peace above,—  
Shedding its love-lit rays!

### 2

Its scented boughs poured on the air,  
So pregnant with oil and steam,  
The real home odor of shady woods.  
It banished all thought of worldly goods;  
It stood there; a crystalized dream!  
It whispered softly of peace on earth  
In this fortress of hell-fire here.  
But through its smiles, each tinsel rope  
Gradually drooped with departing hope,  
And each crystal turned to a tear!  
Glistening tears were these tinsels gay  
Which bravely their smiles had kept;  
But cannon and machine-guns, glum,  
Told of such bloodshed sure to come,  
That even the candles wept!



“Oh! Load these cannon with love!” they  
cried,  
“Instead of powder; and then  
Let go a broadside of Christmas joys  
That will smother the loudest battle’s noise!”  
And the sailors sighed, “Amen!”

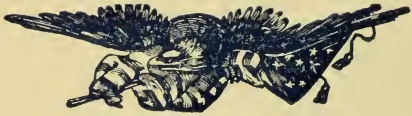


## MY GUARDIAN

Since mother died I've often seen  
While gazing o'er the sea,  
Resplendent in the racing foam  
Her figure, watching me.  
It follows me thro storm and sun,  
It rides on the fleecy foam,  
And o'er the roar of the surf, I hear,  
Her plaintive plea, "Come home!"

Full well, I know, when battle comes,  
And our vessel belches flame,  
From every port, still shall I see  
My vision just the same.  
Bright as a light-ray from the Throne  
'Twill shine thro the smoky air,  
Exalted, itself, o'er earthly harm,  
Freed from all mortal care.

And some day, should some mighty shell  
Snuff out my lonely life,  
My vision will vacate at once  
The scenes of blood and strife;  
And when I fall, she'll quickly come  
Thro gas and smoke and gloam,  
With outstretched hand,—and I'll obey  
Her *joyous* cry,—“Come home!”





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